

I want to address a matter that has been simmering on the back burner, and which I find it unfortunate to need to discuss - that is the personal attacks on my commitment to the First Ward, and to my work as a city council member.

First, I respect and am grateful for citizens of Columbia who have engaged in a productive and community-minded manner with me on the issues. It has been my life-long belief and practice to talk to everyone, and not to put much stock in the divisive labels. In the Columbia in which I was born and raised, citizens could differ over our approaches to the issues without questioning each others' character and motivations. It is still how I believe in practicing politics and engaging in public service.

Unfortunately, there are a handful of people in our community who would rather engage in the politics of personal attack, and who have made repeated attempts to insert national divisiveness and vitriol into our local community. As our elders remind us, our enemy on one issue will be our allies on the next. Columbia is a small town, and we will find that the person we attack will be sitting next to us at church, at a ball game, or at a dinner. We can disagree over the issues, but those who would like to have my ear would find me more open to conversation that does not begin with a full frontal assault.

SO - People started a rumor that I do not live in the ward. They went looking for me on Anderson. I do not live on Anderson. I live on Ash. Naturally, if you look for someone where they do not live, you won't find them. The rumor quoted ONE person, who is NOT my neighbor, and has posted to Facebook that she was mis-quoted. Meantime, a KOMU reporter, Chloe Alexander, went to my house, and everyone who was out or answered the door said that I live in that house right over there, and they see me all the time. But the story didn't run. Why? Because...there is no story!

Did those who spread the rumor bother check with me? Did they check with my actual neighbors? No. They just made things up. Further, they wasted valuable staff time by filing complaints with the city attorney and ONS. These are serious legal charges.

It is incumbent on the attacker, not me, to substantiate their claims. People shouldn't just throw mud at the wall to see what sticks. They are distracting the public from the real issues facing Columbia.

THERE'S MORE - When I attempted to respond to the NCCNA yahoo group, where the rumor reached me, I found that my post was blocked. I asked friends to post my reply. THEY were blocked. I inquired who runs the NCCNA yahoo group? The person who spread the rumor. There is one conclusion - the NCCNA yahoo group is censored. It does not, therefore, reflect the opinions of the neighbors. Curiously, as others responded in my defence, all other posts stopped as well.

SO - what are neighborhood associations for? They should be a vehicle for discussion, getting to know each other, social activities, representing the views of ALL the neighbors, and bringing people together. When they are used instead for individuals' personal vendettas, they lose their credibility.

THEREFORE - I am leaving the NCCNA yahoo group, because, now that we know it's censored, it does not reflect the diverse opinions of the neighborhood. I will no longer attend its meetings or read its censored communications. Individual constituents may continue to contact me with concerns.

FOR NOW - I accept the apology of the WANA officer, and for now I will stay with WANA. Even though, far from welcoming us to the neighborhood, the officer or officers filed complaints with the city. I ask, why didn't you just call me and ask? I am a council representative, but I am also a person.

If you want to attack me OR US, skip the personal and the Trash. Do so on the issues. Let's all focus on the issues.

That is all I have to say.

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